



COUNTY OF PLACER

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER, Thomas M. Miller

OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE RISK MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Maryellen Peters, Deputy CEO

145 Fulweiler Ave., Ste. 100 • AUBURN, CA 95603

TELEPHONE (530) 886-2600 • FAX (530) 886-2609

PLACER COUNTY RISK MANAGEMENT

Safety Alert

Guidelines for Outdoor Employees during Wildland Fire Smoke Episodes

Current reports tell us there are an unprecedented 1000+ wildland fires burning in the State of California. Three of those fires are burning in Placer County. The Air Pollution Control District has projected unhealthy air conditions through at least Sunday, June 29th and is anticipating continuing smoky conditions in the region.

The following is meant to be guidance for employees whose job duties require them to work outdoors during wildland fire smoke episodes.

Managers/Supervisors who have employees working outdoors should consider the effects of smoke and plan accordingly. Schedule less strenuous activities when possible and allow for longer breaks in an indoor location when possible. Consider indoor work if possible. Consider alternative tasks where possible to minimize exposure to smoke.

Recognize that each individual employee will have a different tolerance to smoke exposure and management will need to act accordingly, much like with the heat illness prevention regulation. Employees are required to self monitor and report any related issue to their supervisor immediately.

Should an employee report an injury or illness associated with smoke exposure that may be related to their work, the supervisor should direct the employee to one of the approved occupational medical facilities for treatment. Immediately notify Risk Management via e-mail, telephone or fax. Complete an injury or illness report and forward to Risk Management.

Smoke from wildland fires is a mixture of water vapor, gases and fine particles from burning trees and other plant materials. Smoke can irritate your eyes and respiratory system and can worsen chronic heart and lung disease. Other symptoms of smoke exposure include:

- Coughing/scratchy throat
- Irritated sinuses/runny nose
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Stinging eyes

Smoke may worsen symptoms of employees with heart or lung disease or other pre-existing respiratory conditions such as respiratory allergies or asthma. Employees who have concerns about pre-existing conditions should discuss with their physician.

When smoke levels are high enough, even healthy people may experience symptoms. Outdoor employees should be advised/encouraged to minimize their exposures by remaining indoors as much as possible during their non-working hours.

Pay attention to local air quality reports. Listen and watch for news or health warnings about smoke. Find out if your community provides reports about the Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Index (AQI). Also pay attention to public health messages about taking additional safety measures.

Refer to visibility guides if they are available. Not every community has a monitor that measures the amount of particles that are in the air. In the western part of the United States, some communities have guidelines to help people estimate AQI based on how far they can see.

If you are advised to stay indoors, keep indoor air as clean as possible. Keep windows and doors closed unless it is extremely hot outside. Run an air conditioner if you have one, but keep the fresh-air intake closed and the filter clean to prevent outdoor smoke from getting inside. If you do not have an air conditioner and it is too warm to stay inside with the windows closed, seek shelter elsewhere.

Do not add to indoor pollution. When smoke levels are high, do not use anything that burns, such as candles, fireplaces, or gas stoves. Do not vacuum, because vacuuming stirs up particles already inside your home. Do not smoke, because smoking puts even more pollution into the air.

If you have asthma or another lung disease, follow your doctor's advice about medicines and about your respiratory management plan. Call your physician if your symptoms worsen.

Dust masks are not effective. Paper "comfort" or "dust" masks commonly found at hardware stores are designed to trap large particles, such as sawdust. These masks will not protect your lungs from smoke.

Any questions please contact Placer County Risk Management 530-886-2600.

